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The President of the United States published this statement on recent progress and action towards full opportunity for Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Spanish-speaking people. Activities in education, health and welfare, housing, Federal employment, private employment, and rural matters are included. (SW)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT
Lyndon Baines Johnson

A New Focus on Opportunity for the Spanish Speaking American

Last October, in El Paso, I attended a conference of high purpose. There, with the Vice President and members of the Cabinet, I met with 1,200 Spanish speaking Americans.

This was the first time that the Mexican American community had an opportunity to discuss matters of direct concern -- ranging from education to economic opportunity, housing to health -- with the highest officials of government.

The aim of the three-day conference was to assure that America's second largest minority was receiving its fair and just share of Federal programs in these areas.

Out of that conference, ideas and suggestions flowed to a Cabinet-level Committee on Mexican American Affairs, which I appointed last June.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee -- many of which stemmed from the El Paso Conference -- I have taken the following actions:

In Education:

-- I have signed into law the first Federal bilingual education program. It will help Spanish speaking children overcome the barriers of language which have prevented them from receiving the fullest benefits of education.

-- I have asked Congress to provide funds to expand and improve adult and vocational educational programs aimed particularly at those Americans who have no high school diplomas. About 20 percent of these are Spanish speaking.

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I have instructed the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to:

-- accelerate the training of specially-trained teachers to work with Mexican American school children and migrant workers.

-- insure compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This forbids discrimination in school-district boundaries and in quality of education, wherever the schools receive Federal financial assistance.

In Health and Welfare:

I have requested the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to:

-- simplify application and claim procedures in Medicare, Social Security and other programs serving the Mexican American communities.

-- gather and analyze data on the health of Spanish speaking Americans.

I have asked the Congress to increase its support of special medical programs for migrant farm workers, most of whom are Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans.

I have appointed a distinguished Mexican American scholar, Dr. Julian Samora, to a Presidential Commission evaluating the Nation's welfare system.

In Housing:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has selected a number of cities to begin planning under the Model Cities Program. Among them are San Antonio, Eagle Pass, and Waco, Texas; Denver and Trinidad, Colorado; Albuquerque, New Mexico; New York City and San Juan, Puerto Rico -- all with large Spanish speaking populations.

-- I have directed the Secretary of HUD to work with Laredo, Texas and its sister city in Mexico, Nuevo Laredo, in an international cooperative effort to help develop a Model Cities Program that will improve the condition of life in this border area.

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-- I have requested, in the 1969 budget, $1 billion for the Model Cities Program to revitalize and rebuild entire slum neighborhoods and barrios. In my Special Message on the Cities, I asked the Congress, industry and labor to begin a ten-year program to construct six million new housing units for low and moderate income families, many of whom are Spanish speaking.

-- I have urged the Congress -- once more -- to pass a fair housing law, insuring that all Americans can have the opportunity to live in a place of their own choosing.

In Federal Employment:

I have instructed all Federal agencies:

-- to work together to increase employment opportunities for Spanish speaking Americans.

-- to require employees to know Spanish where they serve large groups of Spanish speaking people.

-- to re-examine their hiring and recruiting methods to assure that potentially good workers are not refused jobs because a language barrier works against them in written examination.

In Private Employment:

-- I have asked Congress for funds to extend a test training program to relocate workers from areas of high unemployment to those where work is available.

-- I have moved to assure that Federal manpower training programs provide English language training for Spanish speaking people who need it.

-- I have proposed the Job Opportunities in Business Sector (JOBS) Program -- a new partnership between government and private industry -- to train and hire those who have the greatest difficulty finding work.

-- I have directed the Secretary of Labor to bring together in one unified effort all manpower programs for an attack on hard-core rural and urban unemployment. As a result, the Concentrated Employment Program is underway in several of the largest cities of the Southwest.

I have recommended expansion of this program in the 1969 budget.

-- I have urged Congress again, as I did last year, to give the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission the power to order a halt to employment discrimination.

In Rural Matters:

-- I have asked the Congress to authorize a major project to improve Forest Service grazing lands in the Southwest, to serve the small rancher.

-- I have instructed the Secretary of Agriculture to expand the activities of the County Extension Service to meet more fully the needs of the small Mexican American farmer.

-- I am directing the Secretaries of Agriculture and Labor to hold hearings so that they can set realistic minimum wages for certain farm workers.

Last June, when I established the Cabinet Committee on Mexican American Affairs, I said: "We today reaffirm this truth: That what we do for any minority, we do as well for any majority. After all, we do this for all of America."

These convictions remain firm and resolute. With this report of progress and action, we have begun the journey towards full opportunity for the Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish speaking people of our land.

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